

Message Text

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ACTION PER-03

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FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9133

UNCLAS JIDDA 6395

FROM THE AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CGEN, APER (BENSON, ROSS E.)

SUBJECT: ASSIGNMENT OF CONSULAR OFFICER BENSON AS GSO

1. JIDDA'S GENERAL SERVICES OFFICER, EDWARD POHL, IS SCHEDULED TO BE TRANSFERRED IN APRIL 1974, ALTHOUGH BOTH POHL AND THE EMBASSY WOULD BE FLEXIBLE ABOUT THIS ETD IF THE POSSIBILITIES FOR A GOOD ONWARD ASSIGNMENT WOULD BE ENHANCED, OR IF THIS WERE REQUIRED BY THE NEEDS OF THE SERVICE. AS A REPLACEMENT FOR ED POHL, I REQUEST THE DEPARTMENT'S APPROVAL TO THE TRANSFER OF JIDDA'S VERY ABLE CONSULAR OFFICER, ROSS BENSON, TO THE GENERAL SERVICES OFFICER'S POSITION (52-2310-047).

2. AS THE EMBASSY HAS INDICATED IN MR. BENSON'S EFFICIENCY REPORTS, HE HAS DONE AN EXCEPTIONALLY GOOD JOB AS HEAD OF THE CONSULAR SECTION, ALTHOUGH HIS WORKLOAD HAS ALMOST DOUBLED IN THE PAST TWO YEARS. MR. BENSON, MOREOVER, SHOWS EXCEPTIONAL FLAIR FOR MANAGEMENT, FOR MASTERY OF REGULATIONS, AND FOR HANDLING PEOPLE EFFECTIVELY AND WITH TACT. HIS JOB OFTEN REQUIRES HIM TO SAY "NO" TO HIS NUMEROUS PETITIONERS, BUT I HAVE NEVER HEARD ANYTHING BUT PRAISE FROM EITHER AMERICAN OR SAUDI NATIONALS FOR HIS PERFORMANCE AS CONSULAR OFFICER, OR HIS TREATMENT OF THEM.

3. MR. BENSON HAS AT VARIOUS TIMES IN THE PAST SPOKEN OF HIS INTEREST IN ADMINISTRATIVE WORK. (HE HAS, IN FACT, BEEN CONSIDERING TAKING A YEAR'S LEAVE OF ABSENCE TO WORK TOWARD HIS MPA.) HIS RATING OFFICER HAS SPECIFICALLY

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RECOMMENDED ADMINISTRATION AS PARTICULARLY DESERVING OF

MR. BENSON'S TALENTS.

4. APART FROM THE ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE ACQUIRED IN MANAGING HIS OWN SECTION, MR. BENSON HAS HAD A CONSIDERABLE EXPOSURE TO ADMINISTRATIVE WORK IN THE PAST. DURING HIS SERVICE IN GUADALAJARA, HE STUDIED OFFICE MANAGEMENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA NIGHT SCHOOL. PRIOR TO JOINING THE FOREIGN SERVICE, MOREOVER, MR. BENSON HAD SERVED FOR 6 1/2 YEARS AS AN OFFICER IN THE U.S. AIR FORCE, REACHING THE RANK OF CAPTAIN. WHILE IN THE AIR FORCE, MR. BENSON DEALT WITH COMMUNICATIONS, TRANSPORTATION, AND OTHER PRIMARILY ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTIONS.

5. IF MR. BENSON'S TRANSFER TO THE GENERAL SERVICES OFFICER POSITION IS APPROVED, HE WOULD LIKE TO EXTEND FOR AN ADDITIONAL TWO YEARS IN JIDDA. WE ARE, OF COURSE, LOOKING FORWARD TO THE ARRIVAL OF A NEW CONSULAR OFFICER, MR. ELIAS BARSOUM, BUT NOTE THAT THE JIDDA ASSIGNMENT WILL BE MR. BARSOUM'S FIRST OVERSEAS POSTING. UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, I THINK IT WOULD BE A SOURCE OF STRENGTH AND ASSURANCE BOTH TO MR. BARSOUM AND TO THE POST IF HE COULD COUNT ON THE BACKUP PRESENCE OF MR. BENSON IN THE GENERAL SERVICES SECTION, AS MR. BARSOUM HIMSELF ADAPTS TO THE HEAVY WORKLOAD IN SAUDI ARABIA. (WE WILL SHORTLY BE REQUESTING A SECOND CONSULAR OFFICER POSITION FOR JIDDA.)

6. I STRONGLY URGE EARLY APPROVAL OF THIS IN-EMBASSY SHIFT. THE NUMBER OF CROSS-CONE TRANSFERS MAY BE LIMITED, BUT ROSS BENSON'S MANAGERIAL AND PERSONAL SKILLS, PLUS HIS PROVEN ABILITY TO LIVE AND WORK EFFECTIVELY IN THE MIDDLE EAST (IN THE AIR FORCE HE SERVED IN TURKEY) WOULD MAKE HIM AN EXCEPTIONAL ADDITION TO THE ADMINISTRATIVE CONE AND TO THE ADMINISTRATIVE SECTION AT THIS ACTIVE AND GROWING POST.

IN TERMS OF MANAGERIAL SCOPE, THE JOB WOULD BE AN EXCELLENT ONE FOR MR. BENSON, AS HE WOULD BE SUPERVISING AT LEAST TWO AMERICANS, AND ABOUT 60 LOCAL EMPLOYEES. ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER CHARLES DOSCHER WELCOMES THE POSSIBILITY OF MR. BENSON'S MOVE.

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7. WITH RESPECT TO MR. BENSON'S FORMAL AND ON-THE-JOB TRAINING, THE POST PROPOSES THAT MR. BENSON BE ENROLLED IN THE FSI ADMINISTRATIVE OPERATIONS COURSE (A112) BEGINNING JANUARY 6, 1975, RETURNING TO POST BY MID-FEBRUARY. PENDING DEPARTURE OF MR. POHL IN APRIL OR MAY, THIS WOULD PROVIDE OPPORTUNITY FOR ON-THE-JOB-TRAINING WHICH, IN VIEW OF MR. POHL'S FIVE YEARS AT

POST, SHOULD PROVE INVALUABLE TO MR. BENSON WHEN HE TAKES
OVER THE DUTIES OF THE GENERAL SERVICES OFFICER.
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